

Stepping up at the Australian Tennis Open

Margaret Beaton 04 February 2012

A distinguished [blogger in Forbes](#) magazine caught my attention with a topical and insightful way of thinking about what should mentoring mean for those 'stepping up' into leadership roles.

As the recent epic struggles on the courts of the Australian Tennis Open dramatically demonstrated, competition brings out the best in a person in whatever she or he chooses to do. Using the Open as an analogy our blogger—Sydney Finkelstein, a professor of strategy and leadership at Tuck School of Business—questions the success of executive development in helping people 'step up'?

Mentoring, which provides support to help the less senior navigate their careers, is necessary but not sufficient he argues. Challenge—or stretch—is essential. To yield the best results the bar must be set high; it should never be stationary; and should always be rising. This is where the Tennis analogy comes in: Federer and Nadal set the standard for Djokovic.

What Federer and Nadal have done for Djokovic suggests a high and rising bar will bring out the best in developing leaders.

Now there's a challenge for mentors—and executive coaches.

This post was written by Dr [Margaret Beaton](#), a director of [Beaton Executive Coaching](#) and [Beaton Research + Consulting](#). You can also find Margaret on [LinkedIn](#).